



## Emergent Approach Drama

### *Extend in Time*

(Angela is the marketing manager and Louise is the R&D manager for an electronics parts manufacturer, both reporting to the global business director, Janzen. They are sitting in Janzen's office discussing the oncoming strategy development program.)

ANGELA That's right, we are not gonna do it.

JANZEN What's going on, Angela? Don't you want to be part of SEDP?

ANGELA What's a SEDP?

JANZEN The Strategy Excellence Development Process.

LOUISE How do you say that? Sed-Dip? Or Sedip with the accent on dip? Or Sed-pugh? That's tricky...

ANGELA Oh yeah, four-letter acronyms now, that's deep. Well, no, we do not want to be part of Sed-Pugh, or whatever it is, because we have had enough.

JANZEN "You've had enough" – had enough of what? Say more.

ANGELA We want something different than these quick schemes. We need to stretch out so that the right people can be part of it and so we can run pilots. We're going to take eight months, not eight weeks.

JANZEN Okay, Angela...but there's one little problem; we have our review with the board in two months.

ANGELA They only like these reviews so they can set more goals. They don't listen to what we say.

JANZEN Do we have the time for an extended approach, even if we ignore the upcoming review?

ANGELA Do we have time not to?

LOUISE That is such a cliché.

ANGELA But it works; don't it?

LOUISE If the cliché fits, wear it, baby.

JANZEN Ugh, Ladies, I have a meeting at 3:30.

ANGELA Oh sorry. OK. Our people get nothing out of these short strategy programs. They sit in a bunch of meetings on the supposedly new approach, and they just nod their heads and go back to what they were doing before.

LOUISE Or worse, everyone gets excited as if we've actually figured out something new, but it's all forgotten in a few months.

JANZEN Yes, OK, it takes some time to drive change into the organization, but that doesn't mean we need a long time to create the plan of attack.

ANGELA We do need longer time if we want to run pilots, and we do need longer time if we want to include the voice of the people on the front lines - if we want an approach that people understand and internalize.

LOUISE You see, Janzen, what Angela is trying to say is that our key people can't drop everything for eight weeks. Some of them have multiple responsibilities and some are running things day to day. If these people are going to be part of strategy design, it can't be a full-time project.

JANZEN But if their view is so good, how come we're struggling?

ANGELA We didn't say they've got the answer—we're saying we need them as part of the answer. Maybe they aren't up to the task, but we're not either. We do strategy for them, then we blame them for failure even though they weren't part of the design.

JANZEN Angela, Louise, this project will be led by some of the most respected consultants in the world.

ANGELA Yes, they are great consultants. They work all day long; sleeping on the sofas at night; sending out for pizza; sending out slides to their folks on the other side of the earth to be created at night...

LOUISE Twenty-four-hour round-the-clock PowerPoint cre-a-tion!

ANGELA ...bright brilliant kids with brilliant supervisors, figuring everything out every day... (looks to Louise) good lookin' too.

LOUISE Yeah, did you see that kid, James? Oooh! He looked a little like Will Smith.

Angela Hmm hum, you got that right, he did look like Will Smith. That boy is going somewhere.

JANZEN Louise, could you please shut the door (Louise gets up and does so).

ANGELA Then they interview us, they meet, they call in the heavyweight experts from headquarters; they give updates; they show how the process is "on track and within budget" and scheduled to be finished on August 17, so everyone can go on vacation. Then after eight weeks they disappear.

LOUISE Puff, they are gone.

ANGELA And you are left standing there with a bitchin 155-page PowerPoint deck and the instruction that if you have any questions, don't hesitate to call.

LOUISE I got a pile sitting on the shelf. Maybe I should wallpaper my office with 'em. Might look nice.

JANZEN Didn't Elizabeth Cote, head of planning, lead it last year, she's not a consultant, and do you think you are exaggerating a little?

ANGELA Am I? You want to know something else? I don't think the consultants believe in these short programs either. They just do it because they think we want it this way...

JANZEN Say more.

ANGELA They don't believe they can do the job in eight weeks. They want to give prolonged guidance, they know changes will be needed and the design will not be right at first. They know the people need time to learn.

JANZEN But we won't pay for it.

ANGELA Exactly. You know how expensive they are.

JANZEN Well, they are world class.

Angela But that doesn't mean they can figure out anything or drive anything into the organization in eight weeks either. Once I asked the managing director of ACME Consulting why they don't spread out the work—you know, if we won't pay for eight months of continuous work, then why not spread eight weeks of work over eight months?

JANZEN What did he say?

ANGELA He said that it was too difficult to arrange schedules and billing if they work on several jobs simultaneously. That it's too complicated.

LOUISE Amazing.

JANZEN Why amazing?

ANGELA Because these consultants are paid a fortune to advise governments and the military and multi-billion dollar corporations on vital issues, but they can't figure out how to schedule or pay people working in a few different locations. Come on.

JANZEN Don't we need to do the long-term work ourselves? And it's obviously going to be iterative.

ANGELA (Slowly looks over her glasses to Janzen and lowers her voice) You know Janzen, we love ya', we really do, but you know that is b-u-l-l-shit. I must'a heard it a hundred times—oh, don't worry, it's iterative, it's evergreen.

LOUISE That's just corporate jive for "let's stay on schedule and on budget."

ANGELA We don't iterate; it ain't evergreen. You can't adapt in eight weeks. The PowerPoint decks go on the shelf and we go back to doing pretty much what we were doing before. And one reason is no one can design something new that has

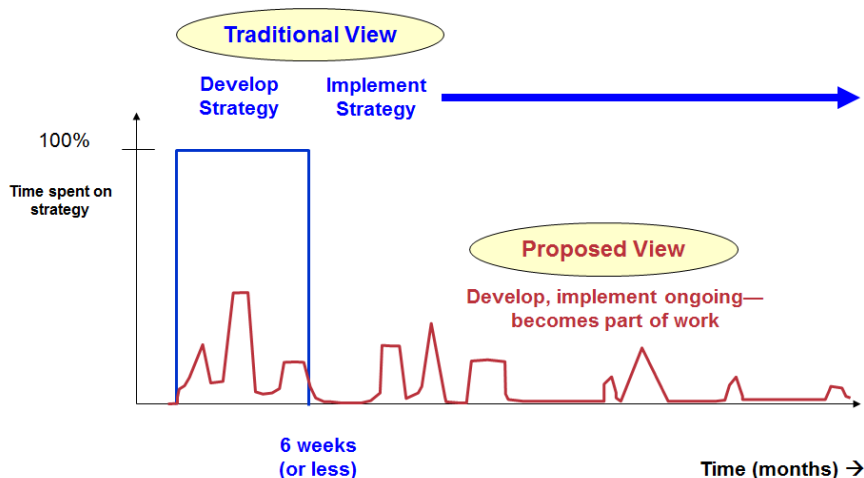
meaning in such short time. We only change when conditions force us to. We never work to anticipate.

JANZEN You take such an extreme view.

ANGELA Take a look at this summary sheet

Benefits of Extending Strategy Work in Time	
<b>Time to involve all the needed people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All relevant voices in all relevant functions are heard; it becomes the people's strategy design. The people develop emotional attachment.</li> </ul>
<b>Time for soak</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incubation and internalization; reality testing; perspective</li> </ul>
<b>Time for experimentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trials, research, pilots, and demos have much more meaning before strategy is crystallized.</li> </ul>
<b>Time for simplicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just because something is simple doesn't make it true, multiple adaptive generations are needed for useful simplicity.</li> </ul>

ANGELA Here's another figure we found on some guy's web site. It shows strategizing in an ongoing process blended with implementation, something we can aspire to.



LOUISE Can I just say, never underestimate the value of soak. It's easy to get caught up in the euphoria of wonderful new visions and plans, but will you still love it tomorrow? Changing people's minds takes time. Biases don't melt away by transmitting to people that it's bad to have biases. They have to come to it themselves. They may acquiesce, but that is even worse.

ANGELA Extending in time will obviously not automatically give these benefits; but extending in time is often necessary to get them.

JANZEN Can you commit to finishing in eight months?

ANGELA Don't know.

JANZEN You need to know.

LOUISE Why? You hold weekly and monthly and quarterly and yearly meetings—when are you going to be finished?

JANZEN Wait a minute, that's not the same thing.

ANGELA Why isn't it the same thing? Why does strategizing need to be finished?

JANZEN OK...look, I'm not sure our leadership will be willing to go this direction.

ANGELA Maybe you don't even have to tell them? Just give 'em the same stuff we submitted last year for the review. Change the numbers and some of the colors.

LOUISE Yeah, maybe turn the graphs upside down and backwards. They'll never know. They don't even look at the stuff. I wonder why they ask for it.

JANZEN Oh boy (takes a deep breath and puts his hands behind his head), let me do some thinking. Let's talk Friday. In the meantime, please promise to keep things cool for a few days, OK?

ANGELA We will do our very best?

LOUISE You can count on us, Mr. Janzen.